

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 MOSCOW 7647

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GENEVA FOR USDEL CSCE

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E.O. 11652: GDS

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SUBJECT: WHY THE 30TH ANNIVERSARY OF VICTORY CAMPAIGN?

REF: MOSCOW A-203, 5/23/75

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1. SUMMARY. THE RECENTLY COMPLETED, MASSIVE SOVIET

PROPAGANDA CAMPAIGN ON THE THIRTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF OF VE DAY GIVES RISE TO TWO OBVIOUS QUESTIONS. WHAT WAS THE RATIONALE FOR SUCH AN EXTENSIVE CAMPAIGN? AND WHY SUCH BLATANT DISTORTIONS OF THE CONTRIBUTION MADE TO THE COMMON VICTORY? IN THIS CABLE WE DO NOT FOCUS ON THE U.S. PARTICIPATION IN THE ANNIVERSARY, WHICH (AS WE NOTE IN SEPTEL) WE CONSIDER TO HAVE BEEN JUSTIFIED. NOR DO WE TREAT THE MORE GENUINE AND NOSTALGIC ASPECTS OF THE ANNIVERSARY, WHICH AFTER ALL COMMEMORATES THE END OF A WAR IN WHICH 20 MILLION SOVIET CITIZENS LOST THEIR LIVES. RATHER, WE FOCUS HERE ON THE AGITPROP ASPECTS OF THE CAMPAIGN: ON THE EFFECT SOVIET PROPAGANDISTS INTENDED IT TO HAVE ON AUDIENCES IN THE USSR AND ABROAD.

2. THOUGH THE CAMPAIGN WAS PRIMARILY A DOMESTIC ONE, IT WAS SHAPED LARGELY BY THE SOVIET VIEW OF THE OUTSIDE WORLD -- IN THIS INSTANCE THE WEST. THIS VIEW, AT THE RISK OF OVERSIMPLIFICATION, IS ONE ORDINARILY BALANCED SOMEWHAT PRECARIOUSLY BETWEEN GRUDGING ADMIRATION FOR THE CLEVER WEST AND STRONG, OPENLY XENOPHOBIC NATIONALISM AIMED AT THE WEST. DURING THIS CAMPAIGN, HOWEVER, TRADITIONAL XENOPHOBIA CAME STRONGLY TO THE FORE. THE CAMPAIGN REJOICED AT THE VICTORY OVER THE BOGEYMEN OF THE WEST. AT THE SAME TIME, IT WARNED IN STRONG TERMS THAT THESE SAME BOGEYMEN ARE LARGELY STILL INTACT, AND ARE STILL "OUT THERE" (EVEN IF THEIR REPRESENTATIVES WERE PRESENT FOR THE CELEBRATIONS AND WERE OCCASIONALLY ACKNOWLEDGED PUBLICLY). THE COROLLARY LESSON TO BE DERIVED FROM THIS, OF COURSE, IS THAT "IT'S US--ALL OF US TOGETHER -- AGAINST THEM." SOVIET PROPAGANDISTS TOOK ADVANTAGE OF WHAT WAS TO A LARGE DEGREE A NOSTALGIA TRIP FOR THE OLDER GENERATIONS TO STRESS "SOCIALIST UNITY," IDEOLOGICAL VIGILANCE, AND A STRONG LEADING ROLE FOR THE PARTY. THEIR GOAL WAS APPARENTLY TO GUARD AGAINST INTERNAL RELAXATION DURING THE ERA OF DETENTE FOSTERED BY THE "PEACE POLICY" OF BREZHNEV AND THE CPSU. END SUMMARY.

3. THE DECISION TO ACCORD MORE THAN ORDINARY SIGNIFICANCE TO THE 30TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE END OF WW II WAS PROBABLY
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CONCEIVED BY THE KREMLIN AS A CELEBRATION OF THE QUASI-JURIDICAL END OF WW II, AND WAS THUS SEEN AS AN ADJUNCT TO CSCE. THOUGH CSCE WAS NOT COMPLETED IN TIME FOR THE CELEBRATION, EFFORTS WERE NONETHELESS MADE TO DECLARE THE "FRUITS OF VICTORY" TO BE JURIDICALLY FIXED BY OTHER BILATERAL TREATIES (VIZ. THE BREZHNEV SPEECH MAY 8). WHATEVER THE FORMAL REASON, IT ALSO WAS CLEARLY STAGED AS A MEMORY LANE FOR THE PRESENT RULING GENERATION,

WHO SEE VICTORY IN WW II AS THE GREATEST TRIUMPH OF SOVIET HISTORY. AS MUST BE DONE IN THE USSR, THIS BELIEF WAS TRANSLATED INTO IDEOLOGICAL TERMS. THE CAMPAIGN CONTENDED THAT THE DEFEAT OF "IMPERIALISM" IN WW II BROUGHT ABOUT A DECISIVE SHIFT IN THE CORRELATION OF FORCES, AND IN FACT "DETERMINED THE FUTURE OF MANKIND." THIS SHIFT MADE POSSIBLE THE SPREAD OF "SOCIALISM" FROM A SINGLE NATION TO A "COMMONWEALTH," AND WEAKENED "IMPERIALISM" IN OTHER AREAS OF THE WORLD, MAKING POSSIBLE THE GROWTH OF "NATIONAL LIBERATION" AND "PROGRESSIVE" MOVEMENTS.

4. PERHAPS THE MOST OMINOUS IDEOLOGICAL POINT THE SOVIETS DRAW FROM THIS EXERCISE -- ONE THAT GOES EVEN BEYOND NORMAL MARXIST-LENINIST UNIVERSALISM -- IS THAT SINCE THE SOVIET ARMY PLAYED "THE DECISIVE ROLE" IN A STRUGGLE WHICH "DETERMINED THE FATE OF MANKING," THE SOVIET UNION CAN LEGITIMATELY LAY CLAIM TO A HEAVY VOICE IN DETERMINING THE FUTURE COURSE OF WORLD EVENTS. HAVING REAFFIRMED THEIR RIGHT TO THIS ROLE (THE IDEA OF MOTHER RUSSIA AS SAVIOR OF THE WORLD AND OF THE CPSU AS THE FATHER OF ALL PROGRESSIVE FORCES IN THE WORLD IS HARDLY NEW) THE SOVIETS CAN, WITHOUT EMBARRASSMENT, ISSUE SUCH DOCUMENTS AS THEIR APPEAL TO "PEOPLES, PARLIAMENTS, AND GOVERNMENTS," TO PUT AN ACCEPTABLE FACE ON THEIR PRETENSIONS.

5. THOUGH THE VICTORY WAS OFTEN REFERRED TO DURING THE CAMPAIGN AS THE SECOND MOST IMPORTANT EVENT IN SOVIET HISTORY AFTER THE OCTOBER REVOLUTION, AT TIMES IT SEEMED TO RECEIVE MORE EMPHASIS THAN THE REVOLUTION ITSELF. THIS HEIGHTENED IDEOLOGICAL EMPHASIS ON WW II IS THE MOST STRIKING FEATURE OF THE CELEBRATION. WE
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EXPECT (AND IN FACT HAVE BEEN TOLD BY SOVIET OFFICIALS) THAT FURTHER SUCH CAMPAIGNS, THOUGH ON A LESSER SCALE, WILL BE CONDUCTED IN THE FUTURE.

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6. THE DARKER SIDE OF THE NATIONAL CHAUVINISM AND
XENOPHOBIA WHICH STILL ARE A SUBSTANTIAL PART OF THE
SOVIET WORLD VIEW WAS ALSO REFLECTED IN THE CAMPAIGN.
DOMESTICALLY. THE CAMPAIGN SERVED AS A STRONGLY WORDED
WARNING -- ESPECIALLY TO THE YOUNGER GENERATION -- OF
THE CONTINUING NEED FOR NATIONAL UNITY AND VIGILANCE
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AGAINST THE BOGEYMEN OF THE OUTSIDE WORLD. FOR THE
"FRATERNAL STATES" IN EASTERN EUROPE, IT SERVED AS A
REMINDER TO THOSE GOVERNMENTS THAT THE SOVIET UNION IS
NOT ONLY THE INSTRUMENT OF THEIR BIRTH, BUT IS ALSO
THEIR GUARANTOR AGAINST FURTHER THREATS -- POLITICAL OR
MILITARY -- FROM WHATEVER SOURCE, INTERNAL OR EXTERNAL.

IN THIS CONNECTION, IT IS INTERESTING THAT THE OCTOBER WARSAW MEETING WHICH ANNOUNCED THE TIME FRAME OF THE EUROPEAN CP CONFERENCE TIED IT DIRECTLY TO THE MAY 8-9 ANNIVERSARY.

7. THUS, NATURE OF THE CAMPAIGN WAS SUCH THAT THE SOVIETS HAD NO CHOICE BUT TO DOWNPLAY TO THE POINT OF DISTORTION THE CONTRIBUTION OF THEIR WESTERN ALLIES TOWARD THE COMMON VICTORY. OF COURSE, THE PRICE OF WESTERN PARTICIPATION WAS SOME CONCESSION, AS FOR EXAMPLE DEFENSE MINISTER GRECHKO'S ALLUSION TO THE WAR-TIME COOPERATION AS AN EXAMPLE FOR PRESENT-DAY RELATIONS. IN COMPARISON WITH EARLIER ANNIVERSARIES OF THE WAR'S END, THE NOD TO WESTERN PARTICIPATION THIS TIME WAS SUBSTANTIALLY GREATER. TAKING THE CAMPAIGN IN GROSS, HOWEVERN THE CONCESSIONS WERE MINIMAL AND PROBABLY -- TO THE SOVIET NEWSPAPER READER OR TV VIEWER -- NEARLY INVISIBLE. FOR EXAMPLE, WE CANNOT RECALL A SINGLE SIGNIFICANT MENTION OF THE FACT THAT THE U.S. WAS ALSO FIGHTING A WAR IN THE PACIFIC. SOVIET REASONS FOR MOUNTING THE CAMPAIGN, AS WELL AS THEIR VIEW OF THEIR ROLE IN THE WORLD, DEMANDED THAT THEY EXAGGERATE THE ROLE OF THE USSR IN WINNING THE WAR AND PORTRAY VICTORY IN WW II AS THE BEGINNING OF A NEW ERA OF PEACE, WITH MOSCOW ASSUMING THE ROLE OF THE MAIN GUARANTOR OF THAT PEACE. THUS, ONE PRIMARY REASON FOR INVITING DELEGATIONS OF SOVIET WW II ALLIES WAS TO ASSOCIATE THEM WITH THE SOVIET VIEW OF HISTORY THAT WAS SO EARNESTLY PROPAGATED DURING THE FESTIVITIES AND THEREBY TO GIVE THAT VIEW A UNIVERSAL. RATHER THAN PURELY RUSSIAN FLAVOR.

8. HOW SUCCESSFUL ALL THIS WAS FROM THE SOVIET POINT OF VIEW IS ANOTHER QUESTION. OUR GUESS IS THAT THE OLDER GENERATION SEIZED ON THE ANNIVERSARY LARGELY TO REMINISCE ABOUT A TRAUMATIC SHARED EXPERIENCE BUT
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LEFT THE PROPAGANDA PRETTY MUCH ALONE. AND SOVIET PROPAGANDISTS UNDOUBTEDLY REALIZE THAT THE WAR IS A FAST-WASTING ASSET WITH THOSE TOO YOUNG TO HAVE STRONG MEMORIES. WE DOUBT THAT THE YOUNGER GENERATION OF SOVIET CITIZENS SHED MANY TEARS OF NOSTALGIA OVER THE MAY 8-9 HOLIDAY. AND THEY WILL SHED EVEN FEWER WHEN IT COMES AROUND AGAIN, FIVE AND TEN YEARS HENCE.
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